

Lo, lo, lordes, lo • and ladies, taketbt hede,
 Hit lasteth nat longe • that (that which) is lycour
 (juice) swete,
 As pees-coddes and pere-Ionettes (early pears)
 'plomes and chines!
 That lyghtliche launcetli (springs up) • litel while
 dureth,
 And that that rathest (soonest) rypeth • roteth
 most saunest.
 He is certainly a poet, this writer. But
 after all they
 had a better poet of their own. And yet
 Geoffrey Chaucer
 himself, coming home tired from his ledgers
 in the Port
 of London custom-house to sit poring over
 other vol-
 umes of a more congenial kind at home in the
 gate-house
 over Aldgate, until, as the Eagle reminds him
 in his *House*
of Fame, 'fully dawsed is thy loke', may well
 have taken
 hints for his own future pictures of friar
 and pardoner,
 poor parson and poor ploughman, from this
 humble and
 embittered contemporary. It is
 exaggerated, no doubt
 to take the remark of Chaucer's parson:
 I can nat geste—j*un, ram, ruf—by lettre,
 Ne, God wot, rym holde I but litel bettre—
 as a serious sneer at the old-fashioned
 alliterative verse of
Piers Plowman. The parson is speaking, not
 Chaucer; and
 rhyme, he adds, is 'but litel bettre*. Still
 'run, ram, ruf
 is clearly a little mocking—written, we feel,
 with a smile.
 And certainly, as in their metre, so in
 everything else the
 two writers stand at opposite extremes—the
 artist and the
 moralist, the tolerant spectator of the world
 and its pas-
 sionate reformer* Though Chaucer became
 Knight of the
 Shire for Kent in 1386, no one would guess
 that from his
 works; whereas here in *Piers Plowman*
 members of Parlia-

ment could read again and again the very
echoes, as
Jusserand points out, of their own grievances
and petitions
to the Crown. It is most curious to find
this writer
already the complete Roundhead, combining
Puritanism
and Parliamentarianism, three centuries
before Pym and
Cromwell. Even those strange appellations
like Zeal-of-
the-land-busy and Obadiah~bind-thdx-
kings-in-chains